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CONCORDIA TO PRESS QUEBEC FOR BUILDING MONEYS

"Fund-raising campaign will not be affected" — Official

Montreal, April 19, 1984 -- It is hoped that a government subsidy to help in the construction of vital library facilities at Concordia University will not be delayed once again, university officials said today.

The officials were reacting in support of the condemnation last Friday by the Council of Universities of the government's proposal to slice \$28 million from the universities' construction and renovation budget of the Department of Education.

A university spokesman expressed "amazement at the government's attitude. It claims it needs to cut budgets to make ends meet, and we have already demonstrated it will cost less in the long run for us to build new library facilities than to continue renting them, as we do now."

The new facilities would replace thousands of square metres of rented space, for which the University now pays \$3.5 million annually. The government currently pays the entire cost of these -- and other -- rentals.

A study by A.E. Lepage Ltd., one of Canada's leading real estate firms, shows that the government, in funding the construction of University-owned facilities to replace the current rentals, would save money within eight years. Thus, University officials are at a loss to explain the government's hesitation on the library question, because, over the long term, it causes an unnecessary drain on the public purse.

The university spokesman, Public Relations Director David E. Allnutt, said the university is "encouraged that the final decision has not yet been made, and we will continue to press for a positive response to our request. We will seek additional meetings with senior officials in the Education Department and the Treasury Board and, if necessary, eventually with the ministers concerned".

The University has proposed the construction of a new library building downtown; it would also house a number of academic and administrative departments now scattered throughout the downtown area. In addition, a wing would be added to the main library building on the west-end Loyola campus, doubling its size.

The University is asking the Department of Education to underwrite 65 per cent of the \$40 million cost of the construction projects. Concordia would fund the rest primarily through donations which are now being solicited from the public as part of the five-year "Building Together" Capital Campaign.

The University spokesman confirmed that the fund-raising campaign would "in no way be altered due to the apparent setback represented by the Treasury Board's austerity proposals. We are determined to proceed with the campaign on schedule and indeed the detailed planning that precedes the construction of any big, new facility is continuing."

The Council of Universities, which issued last week's warning, is an advisory body to the Minister of Education, who is required by law to consult the group on major policy and financial issues affecting Quebec universities.

In its statement the Council warned that the \$28 million cut demanded by the Treasury Board would have "serious consequences" for the universities' ability to respond to increasing enrolment pressures, and would hamper the institutions in their attempts to train adequately students in the increasingly popular "high tech" fields.

Besides affecting the construction of library space on Concordia's downtown and west-end campuses, the cuts would also jeopardize the renovation and construction of new facilities at a number of other universities in Quebec.

As far back as 1980, then-Education Minister Jacques-Yvan Morin promised government approval and funding for Concordia's projects "within a year", but no further action has followed.

Concordia rents fully 24 per cent of its space, a larger percentage than two of the other three universities in Montreal. It is still one of the few Quebec universities which occupies less space than it is entitled to under government norms.

One of the major drawbacks of rented space is its quality. Such space, for example, is woefully inadequate for libraries, where specially reinforced structures are necessary to support the massive weight of books, and for laboratories, particularly in engineering and computer science.

It is in these latter "high tech" fields that Concordia is feeling the greatest impact of cramped and generally inadequate facilities. As applications for all faculties for September, 1984, have increased 32 per cent over those of just two years ago, only one in eight applicants can be accepted into the Engineering and Computer Science Faculty.